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Turuvasu), consisted of four brothers: Pandya, Kerala, Chola and Kola. These divided the kingdom amongst themselves and the descendants of the last son, Kola, became the ancestors of the present Kols.

There is another legend recorded by Colonel Tickell[1] which tells of two self-existent primeval deities called Ote Boram and Sing Bonga. These deities created a boy and a girl and put them together in a cave expecting them to people the earth. However they were found to be too innocent to give hope of progeny and were therefore instructed by these deities in the art of making rice beer which inflames the passions. This was done, and in the course of time they had twelve sons and twelve daughters. These were divided into pairs in order to form the races to people the world. The choice was made on the basis of the kind of food they chose to eat. Sing Bonga set various kinds of food before them, with results which may be summarized thus:

1st	pair chose	bullock flesh	and became Kols.
2nd	,,	buffalo	,, Bhumiyas.
3rd	,,	vegetables only	,, Brahmins.
4th	,,	Do.	,, Chhatris.
5th & 6th	,,	goat	,, Sudras.
7th & 8th	,,	fish	,, Sudras.
9th	,,	shell fish	,, Bhuiyas.
10th & 11th	,,	pork	,, Santhals.
12th		nothing	,, Ghasis.

As the last pair had nothing the first pair was sorry for them and gave them some of their food and ever since they have been dependent on the Kols for food.

Crooke also records how the Kols of Mirzapur relate that they are emigrants from a place called Kiutali, in the territory of the then Bardi *Raja* in Rewa State. They name one Nanhu as their ancestor and had a tribal temple at Pipri near Chunar on the East Indian Railway, in which they installed Birmha *devi*. "Like many of the kindred tribes, they have legends of a kingdom in the Gangetic valley, whence they were expelled by the Savaras and returned to the hill country of the south."[2]

Russell and Hiralal in *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces* have nothing to add to Crooke's account in connection with traditions of origin. Apparently they did not put much emphasis on this subject.

1 *Ibid.*, p. 296.
2 Crooke, W., *Op. Cit.*, p. 296.

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lower level of civilisation than the Aryans and were so degraded as to be called *dasas*. The mention of the *dasas* being wealthy in cattle and goods, as being good fighters and living in forts was discounted as an exaggeration. Their inferiority was tacitly taken for granted and Marshall comments: "Never for a moment was it imagined that five thousand years ago, before even the Aryans were heard of, the Punjab and Sind, if not other parts of India as well, were enjoying an advanced and singularly uniform civilization of their own, closely akin, but in some respects even superior to that of contemporary Mesopotamia and Egypt."[1] Marshall goes on to sketch the main outlines of their culture and shows that it was "not an incipient civilization, but one already age-old and stereotyped on Indian soil, with many millennia of human endeavour behind it."[2]

Whether the Rigvedic descriptions represent the clash of the "Aryans" and the Indus valley peoples is an open question and waits for further light. Whomsoever they met, as they moved over the plains of northern India, gave them much opposition and it took a long time to overcome and definitely subjugate them. And whether this relatively advanced type of culture succumbed so low before the "Aryans," that its peoples became their servants and slaves is also problematical. Possibly the groups which have become the lower castes in northern India and Bengal belong to an ethnological stream other than that represented by the Mohenjo-daro peoples, and were really a primitive jungle people occupying the highlands of Central India and finding support in the more menial tasks which accompany a higher culture. Those that preferred the jungle ways have as a whole maintained their identity in their forest isolation. More than once they had to retreat before the encroaching "Aryans," and by a series of migrations, now dimly enshrined in their traditions, reached the central parts of India where they now reside.

PARTICULAR: BELIEFS OF THE KOLS IN CENTRAL INDIA. Kols questioned by us in our investigations do not seem to have many definite myths of the place or time of their origin. Those who live in Jubbulpore district almost without exception say that Rewa is their native land, their *desh*, the place of their origin. In Rewa itself two informants, in giving us stories of the origin of the Kols, said that the place of origin was Sheori Narayan, a town in the eastern part of Central Provinces, near the city of Raipur. Another town to the east mentioned by a Rewa Kol is called Pharenda, which, he said, was five or

1 Marshall, John, *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*, Vol. I, p. v.

2 *Ibid.*, p. v.

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173 174 [619] six *kos* east of Rewa city. One of the Kol sub-divisions is called the Binj *kurhi*, and it seems to be generally considered the highest of all their divisions. This group does not seem to exist now-a-days, or at least they do not know where its members may be found, but the implication is that this is the highest group and so perhaps the first group, and that it had its origin in the Binj mountains, the modern Vindhya range of Central India. These mountains lie, generally speaking, to the west of the centre of the Kol population of the present time. The inference might be drawn from these facts that they are from the country to the west. Other informants said that the Kols came into Rewa from the north. It would thus appear that their traditions are very uncertain on this point. Other of their traditions look back to Chitrakot, in the Banda district, which is to the north-west of the present population centre.

173 539 A story is told by Kols that the *devatas* or gods were very happy at the birth of Rama and that they desired to celebrate it properly. What was the best form in which to enter the world, was the question they had to decide. They considered that part of the praise should be by song and drum—the *dholak*—so they conceived the idea that the best they could do would be to take the form of Kols. This they did and built a great temple at Chitrakot, sang songs and played the *dholak* there in honour of Rama. When asked further just why the *devatas* took the form of Kols the answer was a bit fuller than intimated at first. They said that the Kols were both the best labourers and the best singers in the world. No one could build the temple so efficiently and so speedily as they and also none like them could praise so acceptably. Therefore the gods came in the guise of Kols.

Quite consistently the Kols to whom we talked trace their origin back to a certain Sheori or Savari or Shivari, calling her 'The Mother of all Kols.' The name may possibly go back to the Savaras of the *Mahabharata*, although it seems more likely that it is based on a certain Ramayana story. The stories vary considerably but their main purport is as follows: There once lived a certain woman named Sheori. She is called by some Kolni (hence Kols) and by others Bhilni.[1] The latter term links the Kols and the Bhils together: this is quite a common, and significant occurrence in their stories. She was a faithful devotee of Bhagawan. Sometimes those who relate the stories call him Siva and at other times Krishna. She followed her lord always and it was her greatest desire to serve him in any way she could.

[193] 1 '*ni*' is the feminine sign; thus 'Kolni' means a Kol woman. In the same manner 'Bhilni' means a Bhil woman.

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Now it appears that the god was very fond of jungle plums or *ber* (*Zizyphus jujuba*), which she made a habit of gathering for him, and she also gathered large leaves for his couch in the forest. The story goes that for some reason, (unknown at least to the Kols telling the story), Sheori was driven out of some unknown habitation and in her flight to the forest came upon a colony of *rishis*, *munis* and *devatas*. Each devotee had his own little hut and in front of each hut was burning the sacred fire kept alive by cow dung cakes, and beside each fire was the place of meditation. When she arrived she found the colony deserted, as the devotees had all gone for a walk, and to take their bath in a near-by sacred tank. Sheori noticed that the places where the devotees sat for meditation were not very clean, for ashes and other refuse lay scattered about. She was moved to clean all this up while they were still away and this she set out to do and accomplished it before the *ashram* members returned. She swept it all clean, straightened up things, and plastered the place of meditation with cow dung in the most approved way. She then seated herself at one side and awaited their return. When they arrived and saw the woman seated near the sacred fires and realized what she had done they were very angry for they considered that she had defiled the place by her presence. They addressed her harshly and gave her a good scolding which she received meekly and without a word. Hearing this, Bhagawan, or as some said, Rama who is frequently addressed as Bhagawan, was greatly angered and in punishment for their rude behaviour caused their sacred tank to become putrid and full of loathsome insects and worms. At first the devotees did not connect this with their treatment of Sheori, and they were greatly amazed. Then Bhagawan broke in on the astonished group and said : "Unless you take this woman to the tank and cause her to bathe therein, your tank will remain vile and unclean." They were very much surprised, but obeyed Bhagawan and taking Sheori to the tank allowed her to bathe therein. The moment her feet descended the *ghat*, and touched the waters, the tank was transformed and again became pure and wholesome, and all the vile insects vanished.

Later on, as she continued to serve Bhagawan, she gathered jungle plums, keeping the sweet ones for him and eating the others herself. Bhagawan was pleased with her devotion and one day asked her if she would like a boon. He offered her a *raj* or a *barti*— a kingdom or a family, and she chose the latter. Five sons were born to her and ever since the Kols believe that they have been outstanding for the size of their families. "Children are God's gift to us," they say. Yet there are many who find fault with this choice and say that

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173 Sheori was foolish and has brought the Kols into great economic difficulties with her choice of children. However, when asked who the father of these children was they looked rather startled and could give no answer. They were but the gift of Bhagawan. The first five brothers so born eventually scattered and founded various subdivisions: Binj, Thakuriya and Kathautiya being mentioned. The first brother went to the Binj mountains and thus the Binj *kurhi* was formed. Bhagawan's boon was granted to Sheori in the jungles near the modern Sheori-Narayana, not far from Raipur, and today there is a great temple there to which all castes may go and worship.

173 Such traditions as the above are significant as folklore, but indicate that the Kol accounts cannot be very old and certainly not pre-historic, nor can they give us much real information concerning the place of their origin nor their migrations. They are too much diluted with Hindu mythologies and were undoubtedly drawn from Ramayana stories and coloured by their own imagination. They do indicate, however, a definite movement of thought. Even though the Kols possessing a primitive animistic outlook have come into contact with Hinduism and have accepted certain Hindu deities, nevertheless the acculturation has not been complete: the tribal god (Sheori, a goddess in this case), is even yet given preference over Hindu gods, and this in spite of possibly some 3,000 years of contact.

121 Up till now but little information has been available about this interesting group, and there is still much that should be done. This study is mainly of the Kols who are in contact with Hinduism, and no attempt is made to isolate the primitive Kol. Further detailed and systematic fieldwork will undoubtedly supplement and may even correct some of the statements found here, and it is not claimed that this should be taken as the last word on the Kols of Central India.